

MAX PAULI:
THE STORY OF A MAN'S LIFE.

BY HEINRICH HOFFMANN.

CHAPTER I.

Philosopher! contemning wealth and death,
Yet docile, childlike, full of life and love.

—Coleridge.

"Well, brother, so you think we must take the boy?"

"Take him! The question is, what have we done to deserve such luck! A child of our own to educate! Why, there's no knowing what a child may become, trained from his infancy to follow the dictates of the Pure Reason."

"So!" with a snort which did not say much for Fraulein Frenzel's estimate of the pure reason; and then, "Nay, but, brother Fritz, come down out of the 'Pure Reason'—I can't breathe that air! May your Intellectuality be pleased to stand on common ground while I ask, Where's the money to come from?"

"There, Doris, that's the beauty of it! How could I, with my stipend scarce enough for us two, marry, with the hope of begetting children of my own? Two, four, five, there might be—what then? But here's a child, one child, brought to my very door, of my own blood too—my sister's child! Why, it's divinely good!"

"Poor Fritz! I wish you had them of your own; but, as you haven't, what need to have a child at all? That's what I say. The boy has other kin who will come forward if we're not too ready with our offers."

"What! miss such a chance as may never occur again! Nay, good Doris, only listen to the wisdom of the Master, and you will know that to train one human being to be all that the enlightened reason is capable of is better worth than kingdoms."

And the philosopher got up to stride up and down the polished floor with the airy tread of inspiration—list slippers notwithstanding—head thrown back, spectacles elevated to mid-forehead, fingers interlaced, and thumbs pressed against each other with mighty force of purpose; all of which Doris Frenzel regarded with an affectionate twinkle in her small dark eyes, but with a sniff, too, and a half-audible mutter, was it, "That humbugging pagan of Königsberg!"

Then aloud, "All very fine, no doubt, but if the boy comes to us I'll take it on myself to teach him to say his prayers and read his Bible, and if that doesn't keep out some of your philosophical maggots, what will?"

"So you shall, my Doris, so you shall. Prayer—the utterance of desires which shape themselves and fulfil themselves in the utterance; the Bible—if only as a collection of beautiful myths, pastoral allegories—what better steps could he have whereby to rise to the higher life of the reason?"

"Look here, Fritz, if you weren't *you*, I'd go out of that door to-night and never come back. How can you expect a Christian woman to sit still and listen to such paganish stuff? But it's no use talking. Some folk have every sense but common sense. Let us see if we can meet on your own ground. Who was that old pagan who used to go about asking questions?"

"Asking questions? Do you mean Socrates, sister?"

"Ay, that's he. Never say I scorn your philosophers, for Socrates shall be my model."

With a quick turn and a gleam of pleasure the philosopher brings his near-sighted eyes within range of his sister's visage. But the gleam gives place to a much-enduring smile; she was but flouting him again.

"Well?" with dreary cheerfulness.

"Let me see, brother Fritz, you are fifty-three years and four months old to-day, I believe. I suppose you have a tidy little sum laid by in the bank as provision against old age or sickness?"

"Sister!" with pathetic surprise.

"In the bank! No, no; what am I thinking of? That were no wise man's investment. We women know nothing of business after all; but in the Funds, say; or is it that you have bought a snug little farm in the country which is clearing its own price now, but will by-and-by pay rent?"

"I am at a loss to understand. What do you mean?" A little gentle anger mingles with the pain in troubled eyes and tones constrained.

"In a word, brother, have you made any provision at all for a time when our needs may be greater than they are now?"

"What is the object of this catechism? Do I not hand over to you my monthly allowance the day I receive it, to be spent as your prudence shall dictate? Do I reserve anything but the few *groschen* you give me back for—for——"

"Yes, for a pipe! and may you never be without it. Then it is true that no money comes into your hands but what you give me for housekeeping?"

"You know best about that; it is but little, but then it is generous in our prince to allow so much, for my services——"

"Yes, yes, I know; but I have not done asking questions yet. The coat you went to court in this morning is threadbare, and it shines—well, my floor won't take such a polish! To my knowledge you've worn it these fifteen years. Why don't you go to the tailor and order a new one?"

A fine flush rose to Herr Frenzel's spare delicate cheek. Was his own sister trying to mortify him?

"How is it to be paid for if I order it?"

"Ah, that is it, is it? So you can't afford to buy a new coat; no, not once in fifteen years. Now, tell me, what had you for dinner to-day?"

"For dinner? Let's see. A very excellent dinner, no doubt, since my sister prepared it."

This with a courtly bow which deserved the palm for patience after so bad a quarter of an hour. But she was pitiless.

"I will tell you what you had. A mess of potato soup, followed by two or three shavings of *wurst*. Yesterday's dinner was no better; nor that of the day before. No paring, no scraping, will get better dinners out of my housekeeping money. That is why you are no better than a long bag of bones; and why the colour comes and goes in your poor old cheek like that of a girl at her first dance!"

Imagine a canary pressing itself into the furthest corner of its cage from a cat peering in at the bars—conjure up any image of helpless distress, the worse the better, and therein you have a picture of Herr Frenzel's countenance under this pitiless attack. Should he run away? What did she mean by it? Why should

she rasp that proud sensitive soul which was, all the same, humble and gentle as a little child's? But she has not done yet.

"Look at me, brother Fritz. Do you see this patch under the arm, and this, and this, and these darns, and these thin places which must be darned, until I may say the whole is a piece of fancy work wrought by my own needle? This is the best dress I have, and I have had it these ten years!"

"Ah, my God, what shall I do? I cannot bear it!"

And the poor philosopher's head came down on his outspread arms, and his shoulders heaved; if he shed tears, the friendly table concealed that last infirmity. But Doris cried freely, and made no secret of it. There she was, on her knees beside her vanquished foe, with her arms about him, raining kisses on the poor threadbare dressing-gown, because she could not get at hands or face.

"Oh, my Fritz, my angel! Thou art fifty thousand times better than I, and I to talk about being a Christian forsooth! Do I believe that God cares for the sparrows, and doubt that He will provide for this child that belongs to us? Let him come, let him come, brother Fritz, and I will be a mother to him, and he shall never want, nor you nor I neither. There now! my faithlessness has broken my best brother's heart, and all because I would spend the miserable *groschen* on himself. Fritz, Fritz, speak to me! say thou forgiv'st me!"

"There, there, my child! Be comforted! control thyself; we are no longer young. Let us forget that we ever differed for a moment."

And he raised his sister with a kiss, and wishing her a tender good-night, shut himself into his own little room. But he went to bed that night with a double wound in his heart. For the first time in his life he felt the excessive spareness of his means to be a degradation; and worse, how had he failed to preserve that serenity of soul which should distinguish the lover of wisdom! He blushed under his own eyes. There was little sleep for either of the pair that night; for poor Doris knew exactly what she had done—the two separate darts with which she had wounded her brother. Alas, for woman's tongue!

Friedrich Frenzel belonged to a respectable but not noble family, members of which had for generations filled certain offices about the court of the little principality of which Wil-

helmstadt was the capital. Friedrich was a scholar. He had covered himself with glory at the Gymnasium of his native town. He left his University an admirable classic; and, then, what was before him? Nothing, but to return to Wilhelmstadt, penniless and prospectless, and wait for what might turn up. What did turn up was some small office in the Prince's service, by no means enough to live upon, but he had lived upon it ever since, and had brought his sister Doris, homeless otherwise, to share this poor living of his.

Now here is a thing the English mind does not readily comprehend. An English gentleman with miserably small means loses caste. He becomes, say, a market gardener, and marries the carpenter's daughter; or he degenerates into a hanger-on, eking out his pittance with the grudging help of his people. But to hold up his head in absolute independence and dignity of character the while he is under-fed and ill-clad is what an Englishman cannot do. At any rate, he cannot face the world and do it.

This was what Friedrich Frenzel had done for thirty years, never suspecting that his old coat was anybody's business, not even his own; or that the neighbours' tongues were busy about the scanty meals served in that *appartement* in Ludwig Strasse where we find the brother and sister.

Ludwig Strasse was a second-rate street, quite respectable, and—very dull. The little suite of three rooms was on the fifth *étage*, a situation supposed to have advantages, but nobody remembered what, ten minutes after they had heard them detailed by Doris Frenzel. Doris was a brisk little dark-eyed woman with such gifts of speech as enabled her to hold her own with the best at a *Kaffee Klatsche*. She thought much of herself as a Christian woman; but how far her religion began and ended in devotion to her brother nobody knew, she least of all. There are people who whip their gods, and school their gods, and make free to laugh at them a little, because, being gods, there are everyday human matters about which they are ridiculously stupid; and Doris's cult of her brother permitted all these liberties. As for him, he was tall and spare, with kind absent blue eyes, wispy brown hair, a gentle mouth, and a slow dignified manner. It was curious to see a middle-aged face so free from lines about the eyes and mouth; not a scratching marked the passage of bygone states of greed or envy; nor had mirth left wholesome

wrinkles; but there were broad deep lines across the forehead which it was easy to account for once you saw the philosopher draw up his brows in abstract thought. The effect was comic. Five deep ruts appeared, reaching from temple to temple; and Doris was all too ready to cry out,

"There, there, Fritz, your eyes will start out of your head if you drag them up any higher."

What did Herr Frenzel do? For an hour or two in the morning he attended to his duties at the court. Doris said that neither he nor she nor anybody else knew what those duties were. But thereby she showed herself an ungrateful woman; for her brother would never have brought home that monthly stipend if he did not know that he had earned it. For the rest, he read; he read the Greek and Roman classics continually, and that, for two reasons: in the first place, he loved them; and in the second, a dozen or so volumes provide a man with reading for a lifetime; and that is to be considered when you can neither buy nor borrow books.

His classics were as sauce to his meat; but the meat of his intellectual life was the new philosophy which was already beginning to regenerate Germany—and Europe. At any rate, the teaching which resolved the whole duty of man into continuous reaching towards an ever higher platform of pure living was as a fan separating the chaff from the grain. For Friedrich Frenzel, and pure souls like him, here was light enough to go on with. Emmanuel Kant was the prophet who had a message for him. Königsberg was the Mecca of his soul; and, *coûte que coûte*, he must needs have the new books of the master as fast as, in eye-torturing type, they issued from the press, to the sore aggravation of his sister Doris.

CHAPTER II.

Thou little potentate of love, who com'st
With solemn sweet dominion to the old.

—Coleridge.

The child was a new experience to the pair. He was a quaint little chap, who should interest any child-lover; and to these two, unaccustomed to children, his ways were a source of perennial wonder. The thing that most took away their breath was his reasonableness. No need to forbid here or bid there;

Max took in the situation before you had time to out with your "Do" or "Don't." He had himself in hand, too, and had that power to do what he would, the getting of which is the business of a lifetime to most of us. Poor Max! Life had taught him much, though he was only six.

"To see that child at dinner!" said his aunt. Did he eat little for the sake of the other two? "I must set more on the table. The dear little soul mustn't starve himself!"

And the dinners improved, in quantity at any rate; and Doris could afford the change; for no sooner had the child come than a connection by marriage left her a small annuity, which she jumped at as the beginning of great things for the family, but soon recognised as the widow's handful—always a handful only—though never less.

As for little Max, he had learned to measure his dinner by how much was laid on the table for two. He and his grandmother used to be the two; and many a time when the soup fell short granny's weird tales of wood and mine made him forget about that empty ache just above his waistband: the child was breeched at three.

Thus Max lived in two worlds—a pinching, meagre world, where the crumbs for the robins left him short of his breakfast; and a fine glorious world, where any beautiful thing might happen. He had a third world, too, but was never sure of the key to it. Here were angels and dark imps, so he thought of them; queer black shapes, all legs and arms, swarming up trees and houses, getting under the feet of the horses, tripping up old women, doing all the mischiefs that are done. Here was the chief of the imps, and the King of the angels; and this last was the thought that puzzled him; it fell soft as a lullaby on the motherless child-heart; but he was for ever trying to fit the King into his dream-world, where happy children had all they wished for and did all as they pleased; or into the poor waking world, where sticks for the stove and meal for the loaf were always falling short.

"He is, without doubt, a very remarkable child!" said Herr Frenzel, for the fiftieth time at least.

Not that little Max was a wonder; he was only a good intelligent boy, but then to people who are not used to children the *unexpectedness* of their words and ways is a continuous revelation.

So Herr Frenzel resolved to study the child, and the two were happy enough in the process. Early in the morning, while the gossamer webs on the bushes were yet dewy, man and boy would set out to stroll down the long avenue of limes which adorned the main street of Wilhelmstadt. They made an odd pair; the uncle, a "long bag of bones," as Doris uncivilly said, preternaturally tall and thin; and little Max, small of his age and quaint enough in his small man's coat, sending his piping accents up a long way to reach his companion's ear. But, mind you, this difference of standing was the outside show of things; in no time at all Max walked arm-in-arm, cheek-by-jowl with his uncle; he found out his mate in the old child-soul beside him; and because the lesser of any pair usually tries for the lead, it was Max who took the high tone in the talk.

They had been great cronies for a month, and Fritz and Doris had settled it with themselves that the boy was quite at home with them, and happy as the day is long; when the philosopher, with that foolish instinct of philosophers, must needs feel his way:

"Well, my little son Max, art thou happy with us here in Wilhelmstadt?"

"Ye-es; no; I don't think I am—very."

This with the air of a judge deciding a grave case, though up to that minute frolic and laughter and a chase after a hawk-moth in which both friends joined had been the order of the day.

"Not very happy, poor little one; and tell me why?"

"Well, you see, Uncle Fritz" (confidentially), "there is nobody for me to love, here, and I want to love somebody."

Poor Uncle Fritz! the blood rose in his pale thin cheek, stirred by such a wave of emotion as a young man feels when first he discovers himself to be in love. Friedrich Frenzel was in love; all athrob with a virgin passion. Doris could have told him as much these three weeks back (she had been trying ever since to gulp down the fact, and behaved very well on the whole); and now he knows for himself that the little boy, unknown to him a month ago, is the love of his life. It is one of the world's delusions that love—even sudden, passionate love—is only for young men and maidens.

He was taken in, though, by the child, who evaded him, as children do, throwing out hints of feeling which led to nothing.

"And can't my Max love us—his uncle and aunt who love him so dearly?"—this in tones quivering with pity and tenderness for the child who wanted to love and could not.

And Max, with his eyes in the lime under which they were sitting, spies a dor-beetle out for his evening airing.

"Oh, Uncle Fritz, could we catch a dor and tame him? Then I could love *that*. Don't you know, there was a man who had a spider for his friend in a prison, and another man who loved a frog? Let's see what he eats, for I shall have to feed him, you know."

And the dear man put himself away and went into all the talk about the dor-beetle. In time he came to understand that the burden of a passion was not meant for the children, and therefore the volatile little souls fly it with a sure instinct.

But the open mind of our philosopher took teaching as it came, and this bit of childish waywardness was to him an indication. Of course he must needs generalise, as thus:—"I see; it is things and not persons the child wants to love at this stage; I must find outlets for him."

So the two had many sweet little excursions in search of "outlets," which they brought home and littered the place with, to Doris's amazement and disgust. How they could touch the "nasty things" was what she could not see. Sticklebacks and tadpoles in glass bottles were all very well, but who could stand caterpillars and beetles crawling all over the place? To tell the truth, Herr Frenzel himself was mighty shy of the new joys, and when the capture fell to his share, as it commonly did, the eagerness of pursuit and reluctance to touch the prize were amusingly shown in the curve of finger and thumb, in projecting chin and puckered brow, in every line of the bent body.

Max felt no reluctance; it was all one to him whether his nervous little hands were occupied about a soft ball of a robin or about a slimy tadpole; which impartiality his uncle put down to the boy's credit. "Ah," said he, "the child knows no difference between the works of the good God! all living creatures are dear to him."

But there his uncle was wrong; Max did see a difference. He had no antipathies, it is true, but he had his loves and likings, only he was eaten up with curiosity about every grub that came in his way, and wanted to know about it too much to have scruples about touching. We get used to anything. Herr

Frenzel, who would at one time have run away from a spider, came to handle a toad with no other sensations than those of intelligent curiosity; and he, who had been seen by the boys of the town in full flight before a gander, would march boldly, with Max by the hand, full into a field of horned cattle. It was doubtful whether man or boy gained the more by these new experiences. "Ah, heavens!" would the former say, "that I should have lived all my life amongst these wonderful creatures of God, and know no more about them than they know about me!"

What quests the two friends had, out in the fresh air and the sunshine, to be hereafter fondly recalled by both on many a dreary day and in sleepless nights, and even when failing life made all memories wax dim! There was that day when they went after the caddis worms. A neighbour's boy, Willie Steinhardt, had told Max queer tales about their masquerading tricks, and had told him, too, of a pond, full half a dozen miles out of the town, where they were to be found. This was a day's expedition, so Herr Frenzel got a holiday, and invited Doris to join them; but her housewifely soul was bent on cleaning down and brightening up, with a view to an invasion of spring sunshine; though as every room in their apartments looked due north, she need not have been uneasy. So she sent the two off to picnic for the day, with black bread and sausage, and dainty cakes made for the occasion, quite an elegant repast. It was droll, by the way, how soon Doris came to think of her brother and nephew as a pair—one in interests and pursuits.

What a day that was! Even the high road was delightful in the dewy freshness of that spring morning; there were the gentle-folks' houses half smothered in lilac and laburnum and guelder rose; and, then, there were fields faintly flushed with the springing corn or the greener flax. And, further on, the road ran through a bit of fir wood; and they left the highway, and wandered on through a wood path, Max kicking the brown needles under his feet, and both sniffing the delicious scent of the pines—like strawberries, Max decided.

When they had got well into the wood and out of hearing of the waggoners on the road, Max let go his companion's hand, and still shuffling through the dry pine needles, got a few paces in advance, his eyes on the ground, his hands in his pockets. Have you ever noticed that you may read off the whole gamut of a boy's soul by noticing the angle his elbows take when he sticks his

hands in his breeches pockets—from the brisk acute angle of cocksure success, to the significant obtuse angle, hardly an angle at all, of collapse and disappointment? Herr Frenzel had not made out for himself any such philosophy of elbows, but he saw in a minute that the meditative angle of Max's meant confidence, and a looking for sympathy, which must not be obtrusive—no hand-clasping nor shoulder-clapping, if you please,—and which must keep in the background and be content to listen.

"I wonder what I'm going to do!"—this tentatively, thrown back at the uncle without any turn of head.

"When, my Max—when thou art a man?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know! Is it that you want to do some great thing before you grow up?"

"How can I tell, uncle Fritz? I must wait till I know what my task is; and that's what I want to find out all the time."

"Your task, child, must depend on what you are fit for. My hope is, that you will go to school and college and learn a great deal, and perhaps become a professor. Oh, Max, there's a great deal for a wise man to do in these days; all the world is waiting for light! But what a fool I am—how can I expect a child like thee to understand!"

Max's quick ear perceived an unwonted ring in his uncle's tones; he turned round sharply and caught a light of enthusiasm new to him in that mild face, and from that moment the child understood in a dim way that the quiet life led under his eyes meant more than he could fathom. He fell back a few steps and reached up his hand to the ever friendly, long, sensitive fingers of his guardian; and the two went on, fast and in silence, the child for once subdued before the great thoughts stirring in the man.

But the gentle clasp of the small fingers pressed out all besides. The little one, too, had his great thoughts, and now was the moment to fathom them.

"And what task hast thou set thyself, then, child?"

"I don't know, uncle Fritz. I only know I have a task, and am waiting to know what it is."

This time the answer came with the meekness of confidence; the child could unbosom himself the better after that glimpse of his uncle's thoughts. Then followed a child's rambling tale—of

the granny's cottage in the wood, and of a day of heavy rain without and cold within, for the two had forgotten to lay in sticks. How the granny whiled away the time by a tale of a knight in quest of the Cup, and how Max resolved to stop thinking about hot soup, and set about *his* quest. How his grandmother sent him to gather dry sticks in a cave, and how, while, his bundle tied up, he sat waiting for the rain to cease, behold, a lovely shining lady came and told him how he should find the king, who would give him his life's task.

"But I cannot find the way to the king's house, and I don't know what I have to do!"

And Max ended with a sigh, as of one tired with a profitless quest.

"What a beautiful dream, my Max!"

Presto! the connection was broken, the chain of sympathy was snapped; Max dropped his uncle's hand and fell behind, every line of his small person showing disappointment and wounded feeling. "A dream!" Not a word more was to be said about Max's story, that was plain; and as for changing the subject, that was not so easy, when even a squirrel peering pertly at the two out of one of the high boughs of a fir elicited no more than—"I see him."

Herr Frenzel was glad to be out of the wood again; and the sudden sunshine changed the child's mood to one of glee and endless chatter. There was much to talk about; every bit of roadside bank was gay. By-and-by, when they got to the open heath, with free space about them and a lark overhead—Well, we need not follow; nothing happened; no eventful meeting, nor accident, nor lucky find. But we have all such days green in our memory, with nothing to mark them but the beauty of earth and sky and the joy of dear companionship.

(To be continued.)